

REPORT:

WOMEN RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE

FINDINGS FROM A
2007 NEW ZEALAND
RESEARCH STUDY



AT ALTRIS WE BELIEVE IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO NEW ZEALANDERS AND, AS A RESULT, TO NEW ZEALAND BUSINESSES. WE BELIEVE IN THE INHERENT CAPABILITY AND DESIRE OF INDIVIDUALS TO PERFORM TO A HIGH STANDARD AND ACHIEVE GREAT THINGS, GIVEN THE RIGHT CONDITIONS AND SUPPORT.

THE ALTRIS VISION FOR NEW ZEALAND BUSINESS

REPORT:

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Our vision is of a New Zealand whose business leaders truly recognise and value the wealth of talent that exists within their respective organisations, and who foster a working environment that encourages and respects individuals of all genders, cultures and nationalities. These leaders find ways to help their people to work together in a way that celebrates differences and diversity, and values the insights and ideas that can be generated through working with different types of people. These leaders coach more than they tell; support rather than cajole; and lead rather than manage.

Altris believes that there is a huge amount of latent talent within the workforce just waiting to be released through supportive and inspiring leadership. We believe organisations that can find a way to tap into this talent, across the entire workforce, will be those that succeed in this millennium.

WOMEN RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE

WHY WE INITIATED THE WOMEN IN TRANSITION SURVEY

Here we are in the 21st century; a time where we talk about Generation X, Generation Y, different needs, wants and expectations and we have a workforce that is underutilised and short on skilled and talented people.

In our view, one of the reasons New Zealand has a skill shortage is the fact that we have a pool of untapped potential in mothers who have either not returned to the workforce or returned to the workforce but in a role which doesn't make full use of their capability.

We all know ...

- A talent-short market is a growing issue for NZ
- We need to make best use of the resources we have
- In most businesses it's the people that really make the difference

By encouraging women back to the workforce:

- It's a more sustainable approach - avoiding the cost and time involved in hiring a replacement
- They get up to speed more quickly as they already know the organisation
- The organisation retains valuable corporate knowledge

Women make up 47% of the New Zealand workforce and 85% of paid working women have children. They make up 52% of qualified people leaving tertiary education and are now having children much later in life and returning to the workforce more quickly than in the past.

The organisations which are seen to pull this talent back into the market and treat them well can establish themselves as employers of choice.

So, this is very much an issue of importance! At Altris we wanted to get a better idea of what is actually happening out there, so we identified a need to carry out primary research in the New Zealand market.

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SURVEY BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

KEY STATISTICS

A number of 1-1 interviews and small focus groups were used to identify the issues arising for women who were in the process of transitioning out of / back into the workforce as a result of having children. Based on the interviews and focus group outputs, two surveys were made available through the www.altris.co.nz website – one for women still away from the workforce (Transitioning); the other for women who have returned to the workforce (Transitioned).

Our purpose was to answer the following questions:

- What are transitioning women's concerns and what support is currently provided to them?
- What lessons can be learned from those who have transitioned well (or not)?
- What can NZ New Zealand business learn and do to assist?

Responses were received from over 170 women across a number of industries – FMCG; legal; retail; universities; financial services:

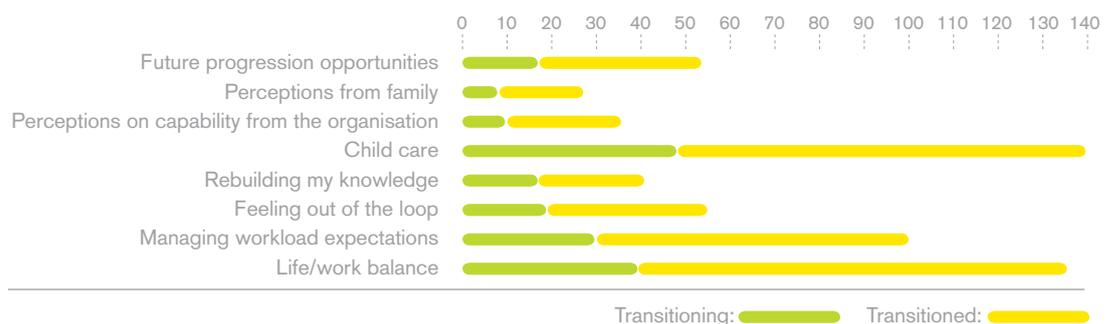
- 46% managers, 54% employees
- Age : 6% < 30, 78% 30- 40, 15% > 40
- 49% 1 child, 42% 2 children, 9% >2 children

The Big Worries

Respondents' main concerns about returning to the workforce centred around:

- Childcare arrangements (nanny or day-care; where; how much will it cost etc.?)
- Impact on work/life balance (How will I integrate my baby into my life and work?)
- Being able to manage the workload (I won't be able to stay on for an extra hour or for a late meeting if I need to pick my baby up from childcare. What impacts will this have on my ability to do what needs to be done at work?).

THE BIG WORRIES ABOUT RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE



WOMEN RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE

KEY STATISTICS

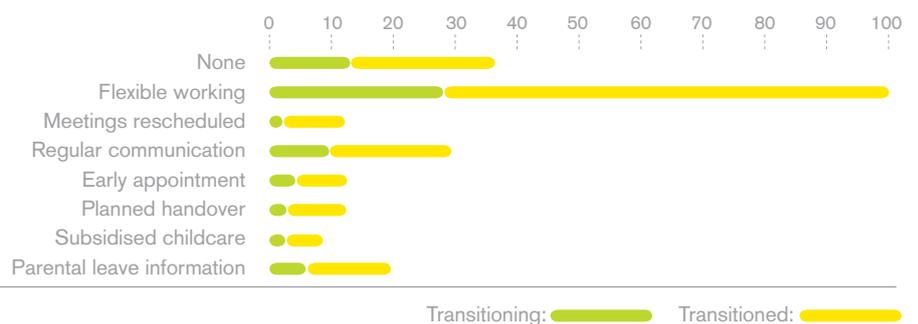
What Support was offered?

The main form of support mentioned was flexible working arrangements (e.g. part-time working; starting later and /or finishing earlier etc.).

Interestingly, 20% of respondents felt that they had been offered no support by their organisations. However we do not know if this is because of a lack of information / marketing of what is provided rather than no support actually being available (perception vs. reality).

Regular communications, early appointment of a replacement and a planned handover period were among other types of support mentioned

WHAT SUPPORT WAS OFFERED?



WOMEN RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE

KEY STATISTICS

What would have helped?

Before they left the organisation all the main areas that would have helped related to planning for their time away i.e. a structured transition plan; information about parental leave; having a replacement appointed and sufficient time to hand over to them.

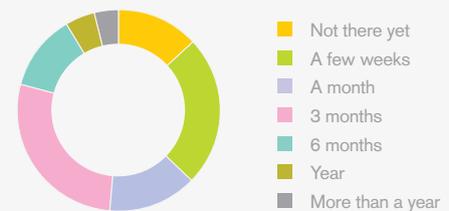
While away from the organisation the focus shifts to a desire for regular communication with the organisation about changes; what's going on etc.

A structured transition plan to assist in return to the workforce was also identified as important, as was the handover from the replacement who has been carrying out the role.

Access to an independent confidante (e.g. internal or external coach) and a 'buddy' (a woman who has recently returned to the organisation after having a child) were also identified as likely to be of help.

Getting back to Peak Performance

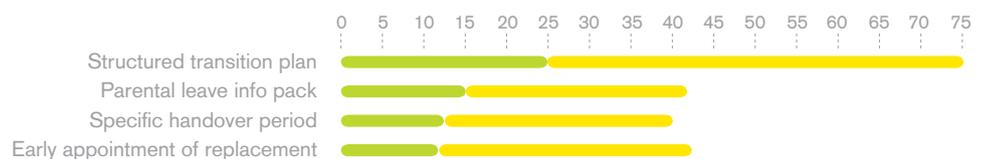
How long did it take you to get back to peak performance?



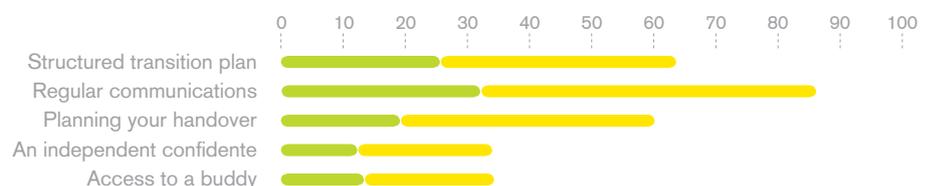
The main reasons given for the time taken to return to peak performance were as follows:

- Tension between focus on work and concerns about how my child is getting on in childcare.
- Restructure/ change which had occurred during their time off and which they had to adjust to.
- Lack of sleep / tiredness.
- Having to take sick leave to care for a sick child.
- 'Baby brain' / feeling that their mental capacity and concentration had been impacted.

BEFORE YOU LEFT THE ORGANISATION



WHILE YOU WERE AWAY



Transitioning: ■ Transitioned: ■

WOMEN RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE

WHAT ADVICE WOULD RESPONDENTS GIVE TO OTHER WOMEN WHO ARE TRANSITIONING?

When asked what advice they would give to other women, those women who had already returned to the workforce made the following comments:

- Take your time / don't expect too much of yourself. ('Don't try to be superwoman').
- Start back part-time if you can.
- Investigate all childcare options as early as possible
- Agree expectations and boundaries with your manager/ the organisation. Be clear about what you are looking for and get clarity about what is expected of you.
- Arrange regular updates on changes / activity while you are away. Keep in touch with colleagues.

SO WHAT? - IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS

The results of the survey identified four main areas where organisations can focus in responding to the needs of women in transition. We would encourage all organisations to look closely at the provisions they make in these areas and to identify where improvements can be made:

1. Communication

- Encouraging early and regular dialogue between the organisation and transitioning women around expectations (of both parties)
- Maintaining contact with women in transition so that they are kept up to date with changes in the organisation while they are away from the workforce. It is apparent that every woman is different in the degree of contact/communication they want while they are away from the organisation. So it is important to deal with each case individually and to ascertain what level of communication is appropriate through discussion and check-in during the period of leave.
- Discussion around flexible working options – what is available; what might be possible?

"I think communication with my employer has been the best thing. Once we talked through my expectations and they told me theirs, I felt like we were on the same page and the transition was going to be ok".

"Try to get more dialogue with your employer. The perception/reality gap seems to be wide as to what you can expect from employers and vice versa".

2. Planning

- Many respondents felt that working with the organisation to put together a structured transition plan (for leaving and re-entering the organisation) would have helped them
- Early appointment of a replacement is important
- Sufficient time to do a good handover to/ from the replacement was mentioned by a high percentage of respondents

"With hindsight I would have arranged a more formal handover with my replacement"

"I would have done better planning in regards to childcare. It would have been great if work had on-site crèche / day-care".

3. Support

- Visible support and understanding from management and team members was identified as extremely important in helping with transitioning back
- Access to an independent confidante or coach to discuss issues, concerns and establish goals for the initial period back at work
- Having access to a 'buddy' – a recently returned mother who could act as a mentor.

"I was welcomed back with open arms so I definitely felt wanted and appreciated"

"The company I work for is fantastic. They let me have flexible hours to begin with on my return. I can leave whenever I need to if my child is sick. They have been very accommodating with my transition back to the work environment"

"Talk to others who have preceded you - so you can access tips and share practical information to make your transition easier. In my case I am encouraging new mums to be a part of my newly formed (working mother's) group"

4. Information

- Provision of parental leave / childcare information
- Information about flexible work options and policies
- Assisting the individual with keeping themselves up to date with changes in the organisation during parental leave

"Get details in writing about breaks and times in the office before you leave to go on maternity leave".

"Find out what paperwork is required for Human Resources and Payroll Services!"

We believe that organisations that are serious about retaining the female talent in their organisations should:

- Talk early and often to women who are transitioning
- Agree on the kind and frequency of communication women would like while they are away
- Discuss mutual expectations
- Plan for the handover to (and from) a replacement and the individual's transition out of (and back into) the organisation
- Put together relevant information (e.g. about parental leave; flexible working options etc) in an easy to access format
- Allow sufficient time for discussions, planning and handover to happen

WOMEN RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE

WHAT NEXT?

At Altris we already have a number of ideas about how we can support organisations that are looking to make full use of the talent that exists in women who are transitioning back into the workforce after having children. These include 1-1 coaching; group coaching; and advice on the production of transition plans, parental leave information and manager guides re parental leave.

We would love to have the opportunity to discuss our ideas with interested parties.

To speak to us about the results of the survey or to enquire about how Altris could help your current situation please call us on 09 414 1394 or email info@altris.co.nz. To find out more about Altris please visit our website www.altris.co.nz.

WHAT IS ALTRIS?

We believe that the talent your business needs is already there within your people and that coaching is the vehicle to release that potential.

We recognise that embarking on coaching in your business can be difficult: Who to use? Which approach? What really works?. That's where we come in. Altris is New Zealand's premier executive coaching group and, as we focus on senior managers and executives, you can be sure that we will bring our experience and skills in this area to you.

Our Philosophies are simple:

We believe in Partnership and will bring a breadth of talented coaches working in collaboration with you to deliver the results that your organisation is looking for.

We believe in Sustainability; we will make full use of your employees' existing skills and knowledge and of your previous investments in recruitment, training and development. So we won't ask you to throw away everything you've ever done and start again.

Our approach is Spirited, so we will bring all of our all energies to share our knowledge as your trusted partner, committed to your results and making your organisation and the lives of your people better.

Our offers to your business are Elegant, tailored to your needs and meeting your values and vision.

ALTRIS IS ALL ABOUT RELEASING POTENTIAL. RELEASING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUR EMPLOYEES AND THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL IN YOUR BUSINESS.





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